

THIRD

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

VERMONT ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY,

PRESENTED AT

BRANDON, FEBRUARY 15, 1837.

BRANDON:

TELEGRAPH PRESS.

1837.

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M. D. GORDON, do.

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E. D. BARBER, of Middlebury.

Treasurer.

BENJAMIN F. HASKELL, of Cornwall.

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THIRD ANNUAL MEETING.

THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society was held at Brandon on the 15th and 16th of February, 1837.

The Society convened in the vestry of the Baptist Church, Rev. JOHN IDE, one of the Vice-Presidents, in the Chair, and C. L. KNAPP, Esq., Secretary.

On motion of Mr. Barber,

Voted, That a committee of one from each county in the State represented, be appointed to nominate officers for the ensuing year.

And Messrs. James Brown, J. W. Hale, David Burroughs, E. D. Barber, Enoch Hebard, John Ide, C. L. Knapp, James Milligan and Alvah Sabin were appointed that committee.

On motion of Dr. Hale,

Voted, That a committee of three be appointed to report resolutions for the consideration and adoption of the Society.

And Messrs. Harvey F. Leavitt, Alvah Sabin and Josiah W. Hale were appointed that committee.

On motion of Mr. Milligan,

Voted, That a committee of three be appointed to draft a memorial to Congress to abolish slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia and Territories, and between the States.

And Messrs. James Milligan, E. D. Barber, and O. S. Murray were appointed that committee.

On motion of Mr. Gordon,

Voted, That a committee of three be appointed to make arrangements for the business and exercises of the Society.

And Messrs. Josiah W. Hale, Isaac F. Merriam and Ephraim Maxham were appointed that committee.

Dr. Hale, from the foregoing committee, made report of the order of exercises for the afternoon.

Mr. Leavitt, from the committee on resolutions, reported the following, which were adopted.

Resolved, That whereas the evil of slavery commenced in laying aside the Bible, and prostrating its righteous claims to regulate the relations of life; therefore, in endeavoring to elevate the character and ameliorate the condition of the slave, we should bear a sacred regard to the authority of God as expressed in his word.

Resolved, That the town and county Anti-Slavery Societies in this State be requested to petition our next State Legislature to instruct our Senators and request our Representatives in Congress to use their most strenuous exertions, in accordance with the constitution, to effect the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and in the Territory of Florida; to suppress the slave trade between the several States; and to oppose the annexation of Texas to the Union.

Mr. Milligan, from the committee on nominations, made report, which was adopted. [See 2d page.]

The Society adjourned to meet in the Baptist Church for public exercises, at 2 o'clock P. M.

2 O'CLOCK P. M.

Society met agreeably to adjournment, Rev. H. F. Leavitt, President, in the Chair.

After prayer and singing by the Choir, Rev. Alvah Sabin, Agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, addressed the meeting at length.

Chauncey L. Knapp, Esq., introduced the following resolution, which he supported at length:

Resolved, That in view of the rapid progress of the Anti-Slavery enterprise, we have abundant occasion to thank God and take courage.

The resolution was adopted.

Mr. O. L. Shafter introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, That we regard emancipation in the British West India dependencies and in South Africa, as an additional step in the demonstration of the problem which asserts, "that the great principle of *equality of right* may, in all cases, be safely and profitably recognized in the government of men.

Which was seconded by E. D. Barber, Esq., who addressed the meeting in its support, together with Dr. J. A. Allen, Mr. B. F. Haskell and Rev. Alvah Sabin, and the same was adopted.

Adjourned to meet at the same place at half past 6 o'clock.

HALF PAST 6 O'CLOCK.

Society met agreeably to adjournment, the President in the Chair.

After prayer and singing by the choir, a letter from Rowland T. Robinson, one of the Vice-Presidents, was read, and

On motion of Mr. Knapp,

Ordered, That the same, with other letters, be published under the direction of the Executive Committee.

Mr. I. Coddington, Agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, That American slavery in *principle* is, under all circumstances, a flagrant sin, and that in practice it is necessarily evil.

Which was seconded by Rev. N. Colver, agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society; both gentlemen addressing the meeting in its support, and it was adopted.

The Society met, after public exercises, in the vestry of the Church, the President in the Chair.

The report of the Treasurer was received, and was ordered to be printed.

On motion of Dr. Hale,

Resolved, That the several Anti-Slavery agents be requested to keep a correct and minute account of all monies collected by them in this State, and furnish the Treasurer of the State Society with such account, also an account of all sums by them transmitted to the Treasurer of the American Society.

On motion of Mr. Barber,

Voted, That the Society raise the ensuing year, for the support of the cause, two thousand five hundred dollars.

Also, *Voted*, That five hundred copies of the proceedings of the Society be published in a pamphlet form, under the direction of the Executive Committee.

On motion of Mr. Knapp,

Voted, That all editors of papers in this State, friendly to universal freedom, be requested to publish the proceedings of this Society.

Society adjourned to 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

FEB. 16, 9 O'CLOCK A. M.

Society met agreeably to adjournment, Rev. Mr. Milligan, the President pro tem., in the Chair.

Dr. Allen introduced the following resolutions, which were severally read and adopted.

Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed to write a circular, expressive of our sympathy and thanks, to the abolitionists of Great Britain, for the deep interest they have taken in the great and good cause of universal emancipation.

And James Milligan, C. L. Knapp and J. P. Miller were appointed said committee.

Resolved, That the late decision of the Supreme Court of the State of Massachusetts, that a slave coming into that State with his master's permission, is free, is an event of congratulation and encouragement to all lovers of liberty and justice.

Resolved, That the clause of the Constitution of the United States which declares that "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law," justly entitles fugitive slaves to trial by jury; and that the general principle of law, that every person shall be excluded from giving evidence in his own case, ought to be extended to these slave cases.

Mr. Leavitt, from the committee on resolutions, reported the following, which were read and adopted.

Resolved, That a government of opinion cannot exist, nor popular rights be maintained, except by making the people the source of all power, and providing for an enlightened exercise of that power, by securing the most perfect investigation and discussion upon all questions of importance and interest to the public welfare.

Resolved, That the government of the United States is so framed as to feel the play of public sentiment and body forth the public opinion, securing in this way the rights of the people, and accomplishing all those reforms necessary to their safety, well-being and happiness.

Resolved, That the public sentiment can be enlightened or changed only by freedom of inquiry and discussion, and there must be either a stagnant, tyrannical public opinion, or the widest scope given to the freedom of speech and of the press.

Resolved, That free discussion is the vital principle in any popular government, without which public virtue, patriotism and liberty must languish and die.

Resolved, therefore, That to surrender this right at the dictation of the mob or the

power of government, would be a virtual surrender of the dearest rights of freemen, and a recreant submission to the approaches of the most odious despotism.

Resolved, That as abolitionists we stand pledged to the maintenance of this right, upon every subject of public concernment—and that with it we will stand or fall.

Resolved, That slavery, being an utter subversion of every principle of republicanism, as well as a most complicated system of iniquity, in all its aspects, demands the untiring efforts of every republican, philanthropist and Christian, for its speedy and entire abolition.

Mr. Knapp introduced the following resolutions, which were read and unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That the manly and fearless course of the Hon. John Quincy Adams in the Congress of the United States, in vindication of the sacred right of petition, calls for a grateful acknowledgement from the friends of freedom throughout the country.

Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed to communicate this resolution to Mr. Adams, and convey to him the thanks of this society.

And Messrs. J. A. Allen, C. L. Knapp and E. D. Barber were appointed that committee.

Society met in the Church for public exercises.

Rev. Mr. Colver introduced the following resolution, which he supported at length, and which was adopted.

Resolved, That the objections to the agitation of the question of abolition at the North, and the emancipation of slavery at the South, have their origin in selfishness and worldly expediency.

Society adjourned to meet at the same place at 2 o'clock P. M.

2 O'CLOCK P. M.

Society met pursuant to adjournment, Rev. John Ide in the chair.

Rev. Mr. Colver addressed the meeting, after which the Society met for business.

On motion of Mr. Murray,

Voted, That the Executive Committee be authorized to appoint delegates to the American Society and New-England Convention.

On motion of Mr. Haskell,

Voted, That the subject of depositories should be referred to the Executive Committee.

Dr. Allen introduced the following resolution, which was read and adopted :

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be given to the Baptist and Congregational Societies in this place for the use of their houses of public worship, during the present anniversary session.

The Society adjourned.

M. D. GORDON, Secretary.

REPORT.

WITH those who labor for their Creator, their country and their kind, another year of toil is finished—with the guiltless, heart-broken slave, another year of suffering and sighing—with this guilty nation, another year of foul reproach before the world, and of treasuring up wrath against that day of wrath when the God of the oppressed poor shall make inquisition for innocent blood.

Brethren and friends: We have met at the close of this third campaign—or rather of this third year of a campaign that has been one and unremitted, and that shall continue, Jehovah of hosts being our leader, until slavery, the common foe of God and man, shall be utterly exterminated and trodden into an eternal grave—we have met, we say, on this joyful occasion, to strike kindred hands; to cement coherent hearts; to pour out our united thanks to the Father of mercies for the abundant success that has thus far attended our efforts; to lift up our prayers together for the continuance of His great and gracious aid, that deliverance may be speedy; to renew covenant with each other, and with a covenant keeping God.

The apparent progress of the cause in Vermont is believed to have been greater since our last meeting, than in either of the previous years since the organization of this Society. The following are among the facts on which this belief rests:

Large numbers of Christians are beginning to act in character on this subject. Seven out of the nine Baptist Associations in the State, passed anti-slavery resolutions at their last sessions.* One of these seven, two years ago, refused to hear an agent, or to entertain the subject for a moment. The Quarterly Meeting of

* Some of these resolutions are of a tone elevated to the gospel standard. Take the following:

Resolved, 1. That as Christians and Christian Churches we deeply deplore the existence of slavery in our land—that its existence convicts us of national hypocrisy before the bar of the world—that the position recently taken by slaveholders convinces us that its continuance is a matter of choice on their part, rather than necessity—that we consider slavery as a great sin that must be repented of by those that are guilty of it, or incur the displeasure of Him who has said, “remember them that are in bonds as bound with them.”

2. That we will co-operate with the Christian community in any laudable efforts for the diffusion of light on this subject.

3. That in our opinion the *domestic* slave trade is as revolting to humanity—as obvious a violation of the law of Christ—as the *foreign* slave trade.

4. That we esteem the arousing of the Christian world to this subject, to be an in-

Ferrisburgh for the Society of Friends in the Northern part of Vermont and N. York have petitioned Congress to remove slavery and the slave trade to the extent of its jurisdiction. The Congregationalists and Methodists are beginning to speak out. They will soon have majorities in various parts of the State, to swell the rising cry against oppression.

Numerous meeting-houses have been opened that were before closed against us; and the reluctance, heretofore manifest, at giving notices of anti-slavery meetings from the pulpit, is fast disappearing.

The Monthly Concert for the enslaved, although yet in its infancy, and too much neglected by its friends in this State, is enlisting the sympathies of numerous ministers and influential lay-members in different denominations, who have not otherwise identified themselves with the cause. And how can it be otherwise? How can the professed ministers of Him who proclaims liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound—how can *any* who on the "*First Monday*" of the month pray for Burmah, China, and the isles of the Pacific, for the *universal* spread of truth and salvation—how can these, on the "*Last Monday*, when prayer is to be offered for *American* heathen, made and held such and doubly heathenized by American *Christians*, excuse themselves and have no part or lot in the matter? There is a goodly number, and the number is constantly increasing, who are not thus inconsistent. From the fact that the subjects of their *foreign* prayers and alms differ with themselves in complexion, or from some other cause, they have discovered that the tinge of the skin is not the true test of human identity, of likeness to the Creator's image. They therefore learn that however much the slaves of the South have been ranked with brutes and brutally treated, they are nevertheless *men* who have souls to be saved, rights to be restored, wrongs to be redressed, and wounds to be healed. They also remember that "God is the Judge"—that "in the hands of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof," American oppressors, unless they repent speedily, "shall wring them out and drink them." And the number of ministers is rapidly increasing who are making it a part of their public ministrations to discharge the already too long neglected duty of opening their mouths for the dumb and pleading the cause of the poor and

timation that God is about to emancipate three millions of Americans.—[Union River Association.

Whereas the evils of slavery are so many and so great, and whereas so much has been done to prevent free discussion on that subject,

Resolved, That we deem it our duty to remonstrate against it, and to use all lawful means for its *immediate abolition*.—[Barre Association.

The Baptist State Convention passed the following resolution at its last annual meeting:

Resolved, That we will unitedly labor and pray for the speedy and entire abolition of slavery in the United States and in the world.

needy. In all this, the attentive observer, whether friend or foe, discovers the accelerated progress of our cause.

Again, the advancement of anti-slavery principles in Vermont may be read in the movements of the press. That large portion of the public press which, in obedience to popular clamor, was at one time so loud against abolition, has gradually lowered its tone until it is now nearly silent. There are occasional spasmodic murmurings, but the aristocracy of Vermont finds itself too feeble to sustain the crusade, and it is fast being abandoned.

The mobs, too, another class of agents employed by Northern aristocracy, and co-workers with this portion of the press, have disappeared. Our last report expressed the opinion that mobs had had their day in Vermont. From the transactions of the past year, as well as from the present prospect, your Committee are happy in the belief that in that opinion they were not mistaken.

Farther and full evidence of the advancement of our cause in Vermont, is furnished in the action had on the subject of slavery in the last State Legislature. This evidence will appear the more conclusive in the light of the Legislature's own virtual testimony that it designs in none of its acts to get in advance of public sentiment.* In an elective government, legislative acts that conflict in the least with existing abuses or popular usages, are generally in obedience to the voice of the people. It was manifestly so in the present case. It was so viewed by the enemies of the cause abroad, as well as by friends at home.†

* The committee of the House of Representatives, to whom was referred the memorial for the interdiction by law of the sale of ardent spirits, reported that they did not disagree with the sentiment expressed by the memorialists, "that the evil complained of is a proper and legitimate subject of legislative enactment. The only reason," say they, "why your committee forbear urging an entire change in the license law, at the present time, is the want of an adequate persuasion that the public mind is prepared for so decided a measure." This was a select committee of thirteen, consisting of a member from each county. The House, by ordering 500 copies of the report to be printed, manifested their sympathy and respect for the memorialists: at the same time, by deferring any farther action on the subject, the doctrine advanced by the committee, that it is inexpedient for the acts of the Legislature to get in advance of public sentiment, was virtually endorsed.

From this, as well as from the whole history of the proceedings of our Legislature, nothing can be plainer than that that body felt itself sustained by public sentiment in passing the following resolutions, which were carried almost unanimously at its last session:

"Resolved, By the General Assembly of the State of Vermont, that neither Congress nor the State governments have any constitutional right to abridge the free expression of opinions, or the transmission of them through the medium of the public mails.

Resolved, That Congress do possess the power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.

Resolved, That His Ex. the Governor be requested to transmit a copy of the foregoing resolutions to the Executives of each of the States, and to each of our Senators and Representatives in Congress."

† Look at the following from the N. Y. Courier and Enquirer:

"With the exception of the solitary State of Vermont, it is confidently believed there is not one in the Union whose Legislature could be wrought upon to make a declaration in favor of even the power of Congress to emancipate the slaves of the District of Columbia."

By what other power or influence can it be supposed that the Legislature was "wrought upon," but by the voice of its constituents?

During the year, four County Societies have been formed in the State, and a large number of Town Societies. In one town in the Northern part of the State, which has seventy-five legal voters, a society has been formed embracing *seventy* of the seventy-five.

While the good cause has been thus constantly and rapidly progressing in Vermont, there is no evidence that it has anywhere in the nation been either retrograde or stationary. Every Eastern breeze brings good tidings. Every Western zephyr is a voice of encouragement. Every Southern gale bids us onward to the rescue. The work has not every where gone on so peacefully and undisturbed as it has among us. In some parts the power of the enemy has at times seemed overwhelming. But the defenders of truth and righteousness have in no case surrendered—nor have they given, nor will they give or take a truce. Ask of us what else you will—say they—require us to forego the light of the glorious sun that was created for our eyes; bid us cease to inhale the vital atmosphere that was made for our lungs; command the blood in our heads and limbs never to return to our hearts: but ask us not to give up this contest. We battle under the Lord Almighty for Liberty and Humanity: here we conquer or here we perish.

In Ohio the struggle has been severe. The powers of darkness marshalled their hosts and came up. While they kept themselves to their appropriate and characteristic work of physical violence, they were not “resisted unto blood:” but soon as they came in contact with soul—when they undertook to crush philanthropic spirits, to demand a surrendry of truth and principle, disloyalty to the King of kings, they were “withstood face to face.” It was then that “they went backward and fell to the ground.”

The result has been the same in every instance. The opposition of brute force to argument and reason, has uniformly failed, although sanctioned by the conduct of city mayors, and recommended in the messages of State Governors. One year ago the Governors of New-York and Massachusetts recommended a censorship of the press, and the President of the United States called for an espionage of the public mails. But the *people* have spoken, and the creatures of their power have wisely obeyed. Neither have the Legislatures of these States nor the Congress of the United States seen fit to take up with the executives against the people. And the same virtue and intelligence which has driven these high functionaries in precipitancy from their despotic positions, and has kept state and national legislators in awe, will yet drive slavery from this republic.

For some months past the enemies of our cause have made little or no aggression. There was an attempt among the leaders, of late, to make a rally. At the time our host of agents left New-York for their several fields of labor, the New-York Courier and Enquirer and several kindred prints called loudly for a renewal of violence; but as yet we have heard of no response. Henceforth the attack and invasion is to be ours—defence, defeat and final overthrow remain to all defenders of slavery in this republic.

What should inspire us with courage at this juncture, is the fact that hitherto every aggressive movement of the enemy has been a failure, while every position which we have taken has been defended and maintained. This fact is not more fully or correctly appreciated by any others, than by such men as Wise, Pinckney, Duff Green and McDuffie. All their language on the subject now is the language of defeat and desperation. They now discover that their "corner stone of this republic" [slavery] rests on sand—or is itself sand—and that their superstructure commences with robbery and rises with theft, and falsehood, and heathenism, and lust, and malignity, and soul-murder, and every other abomination, that the Lord hates, terminating in the blackness of everlasting darkness—while abolitionists have eternal truth for their foundation, on which they are building faith, hope, love, benevolence, justice, righteousness, peace, purity, and other fitting materials, terminating in resplendent light. These men are not blind. It is now quite manifest from their words and conduct, that after watching with eagle eyes the whole course of things at home and abroad for the last half dozen years, they have identified the movements of the abolition cause with the march of human improvement; and they are as sure of the consummation of the former, as of the continued advancement of the latter. They see in the distance the mighty car rolling on upon them, whose earthquake power will shake their rotten fabric to the ground, and grind it to powder.

As for slavery in the District of Columbia, the present aspect of things affords no cause for despair. The present is believed to be the last Congress in which so few will stand up to defend the right of petition. It is confidently believed that in every future session the number will be increased of those who, either from a sense of duty owed to their consciences, their country or their God, or from a due regard to the wishes of their constituents, will stand forth, first against such outrageous tyranny and shameful inconsistency as now reign in the lower House of Congress, and then for the suppression of the bloody traffic on the national domain. There must be the same reaction here that there has been in regard to mobs; for the rights of the people are as ruthlessly and as unconstitutionally invaded in some of the treatment which the petitions and the bearers of their petitions have received, as in the past outbreaks of the lawless rabble, the tools of Northern aristocracy. The remedy is one; but the machinery by which it is applied in the latter instance is more complicated. *The remedy is with the people.* But instead of applying it with their own hands directly, as in the former case, they must now make use of instruments. If the instruments already formed cannot be made willing and obedient, then others must be created. This will take a little time, but if need be, it can, and must, and will be done.

During the past year, facts in abundance have been developed showing that the Texan revolution—or more properly insurrection—is an infamous scheme for the extension of the Southern

slave-market. The result of these movements cannot yet be calculated upon with any certainty. Present security, however, against the annexation of this aceldama to the great southwestern charnel house which this nation commenced building with the purchase of Louisiana, lies in the fear of the "chivalrous South" that the abolitionists of Europe will be upon them with their own weapons;* and in the apprehensions of Northern members of Congress, who are yet a majority, that such an acquisition would soon draw the balance of power into the hands of those who use the power they now possess in transforming human flesh into a merchantable commodity. Our representatives, as well as their constituents, have a care about falling into such hands!

In the West Indies the results of emancipation continue to be glorious—all that was ever expected. Two years and a half of freedom, and not a drop of blood spilt. No insurrections. No anarchy. No additional vagrancy. None of the frightful consequences predicted by the friends of slavery here and in Europe.—Law and order prevail. The marriage institution is established. Houses of worship are built. The gospel is preached without restraint. In a word, the blessings of social, civil and religious liberty take the place of the curses and waste and desolations of slavery. However imperceptible the effect on our own country, it must be great, increasing and salutary.

The kingdom of Portugal has lately ranked itself among the nations that have united for the suppression of the foreign slave trade. The event is cause of congratulation to the interests of universal philanthropy, not more on account of the immediate effects on the infernal traffic, expected to result from the act itself, than for the evidence it affords that all Christendom is rousing against the greatest earthly enemy of mankind. Indeed, the evidence to this point and the relief afforded to a few delivered captives, is what is chiefly valuable in all the past and present acts of powerful nations to put down this atrocious commerce. The abolition of American slavery alone, would do more to destroy the foreign trade, than all that has been done—all that will or can be done for that object, while American slavery exists.

In October last a State Anti-Slavery Society was formed in Michigan. On the 31st of January another was formed in Pennsylvania. County and Town Societies have multiplied during the year throughout the Free States, like dew drops.

Men of standing and influence are every where flocking to the standard of Immediate Emancipation. Prejudice and personal pique against those who first lifted up this standard, are dying away among the candid and inquiring. Gradualism and expediency, as their utter powerlessness to remove sin are discovered, are being abandoned.

* Gov. McDuffie lately protested against the annexation of Texas to the United States, for fear of the sympathy with Mexico, of the powers of Europe. There can be no manner of doubt that such sympathy, once enlisted, would thoroughly test the permanency of his "corner stone!"

Your Committee congratulate the friends of truth—the lovers of pure doctrine—the working men in the cause—on their success in keeping the standard properly elevated—in keeping the line drawn between what helps and what hinders. It is to the injury, not to the benefit of any good cause, that men of influence pretend to fall in with its *principles*, while they oppose all or the leading *measures* growing out of those principles.

Your Committee beg leave hereto notice two important measures of the parent Society—if they be the Society's measures—which may be termed *new* in the history of this enterprise. We allude to the recent employment of *female agents*, and of a *children's agent* to travel, lecture and form societies. From such agencies it is but rational to look for great and salutary results. The importance of instilling correct principles into the minds of children, is a dictate of reason and revelation—a maxim that has obtained the universal consent of mankind. It has been said, and no doubt with much truth, that all children, unbiassed by education, are abolitionists. Only "train them up," then, "in the way they should go," and in twenty years—the space of time that it took Clarkson and Wilberforce to bring the English Parliament to act on the foreign slave-trade—we shall have a generation of abolitionists. What is highly felicitous to our cause in this case is, the engagement of HENRY C. WRIGHT as agent. Mr. Wright has been employed as children's minister in Boston. He is a man whose soul is all benevolence and philanthropy, and whose words are the law of kindness. He is the very man for the station to which he is called. The females yet employed as travelling agents, are two sisters of the late lamented Thomas S. Grimke, of South-Carolina. Born and educated in the midst of slavery, naturally endowed with minds of a high order, with corresponding intellectual and moral culture, few are so well qualified as they for such a work. The defenders of legalized robbery, licentiousness and manslaughter, affect much contempt for the undertaking—but after all, they tremble for the consequences. And well they may; for this measure will add no small weight and velocity and power to the mighty engine that is already bearing down upon them, and that ere long will crush American despotism into the dust.

Your Committee will close what they have to communicate on this occasion, by expressing their confidence in the readiness and determination of the members of this Society now to renew the consecration of their powers, their influence, and, if need be, their lives and their fortunes to this cause of God, of liberty and humanity. If there be a dormant energy, let it henceforth be roused into action. While the genius of slavery, the fellest son of perdition that now stalks upon this Western Hemisphere, exercises dominion over our national metropolis—enters our halls of Congress, suppressing discussion, gagging our representatives, and in their persons trampling on our constitutional rights—and holds iron sway over one half of this republic, loading millions of our countrymen with chains of ignorance, heathenism and moral death,

will we cease to raise our prayers to the God of the poor—to lay our petitions before the constituted authorities—to lift up our voices of warning and rebuke in the ears of the guilty? Nay, verily—but now buckling on the whole armour of Truth, we will fly to the rescue, and never give over the contest, until the demon be utterly overthrown and beaten into the dust.

LETTERS

FROM FRIENDS OF THE CAUSE.

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 7, 1837.

MY DEAR BROTHER:

The relation which I have sustained to the Anti-Slavery Society of my native State for the last two years—my personal friendship for a large number of its members—and my warm interest in the great object to which its efforts are directed, conspire to render my necessary absence from its approaching anniversary no small trial to my feelings. Called in the providence of God to labor in another field, and being thus deprived of the privilege of meeting with the Society on the occasion referred to, permit me, through you, to communicate a few thoughts which crowd upon my mind, and which I hope may be found not altogether devoid of interest at the present time.

Of all the topics embraced in the anti-slavery creed, it seems to me that no one is of such transcendent importance, or requires to be held up so prominently before the public mind, as the *deep and universal sinfulness of slaveholding*. It is the turning point of the whole controversy. There is not a single objection to our measures which does not proceed upon a denial of this proposition, and hence its truth needs to be made clearly manifest. That slavery is *generally* sinful, is not often denied, except by its incorrigible advocates, the McDuffies, Greens, Hammonds, Pinckneys and Plumers; but it is strenuously contended that it is not *always* so. It is said there are hundreds of men who love their slaves, who supply all their natural wants, protect them from gross abuse, and afford them religious instruction; and it is insisted that in such cases slavery is no sin. We may speak of slaveholders *generally* as sinners, and apply to them the severest epithets; but we are required, under the penalty of being denounced as uncharitable fanatics, to except from censure the class above-described. Now it appears to me that those who make these demands of us have no adequate conception of what slavery is—that in fact they take a false view of the system. They appear to consider that its sinfulness lies chiefly, if not exclusively, in its fetters and stripes—its chains and manacles. There could not be a greater mistake. These things, vile and sinful as they are, are only the *incidentals* of the system—the fruits of that still greater and more enormous sin, which is the essence of slavery in every case of its existence—THE HOLDING OF MAN AS PROPERTY. In respect to this feature of slavery—that in fact which distinguishes it from every other relation and constitutes its very essence—all slave-holders, the kind as well as the cruel—the wretch who drives his victims, naked and starving, to

their unrequited toil, and subjects them to the most inhuman punishments—and the professed minister of the gospel, who instructs them in their duties to one another and to God, and bows with them before the mercy-seat of Heaven—are upon the same level; they are all alike guilty of withholding inalienable rights—of trampling under foot the image of God, and disregarding the eternal and immutable distinction between a *person* and a *thing*. And herein consists their greatest guilt. The *cruelties* of slavery, as they are generally termed, are as nothing to this—a mere drop in the bucket, compared with the *sin* of making man property. If every slave in the land were as well treated as the happiest of his class, the deep and damning guilt of slavery would still remain, and it would be our duty to bear testimony against the system as “the highest kind of theft”—the most outrageous robbery of which man can be guilty.

Take a case which will illustrate the folly of attempting to screen from censure the class of slaveholders referred to. The foreign slave trade is condemned by law and public opinion as piracy. Why? Is it chiefly because that traffic is attended with peculiar cruelty to those who are its victims? Is it because they are crowded into the “floating hells” without regard to physical comfort, and left to die of thirst and suffocation? Not at all. If the guilt consisted only in the *manner* in which the traffic is carried on, it could not be justly branded as piracy. It is thus branded on account of the *nature* of the act out of which all its attendant evils flow. Suppose a professing Christian should fit out a vessel for the slave trade; and instead of burning and sacking the villages of the defenceless Africans to obtain his cargo of human flesh, he should purchase it of a slaveholding prince; and suppose that instead of crowding his victims into the hold of his vessel in such a manner as to sacrifice their health and comfort, he should afford them every convenience on their voyage. We will suppose that he even decks them with splendid clothing, affords them the most sumptuous fare, and employs a chaplain (the Rev. Mr. TRACY for instance) to pray with and instruct them! Would all this alter the nature of the traffic, or save him from the halter? By no means. He would still be regarded as a wretch fit only for the society of demons! If the slave trade cannot be justified from these incidental circumstances, much less can slavery, which is the fountain from which that trade originates.

If I were called upon to point out a class of slaveholders more guilty than any other, I would point to those very ministers and professing Christians concerning whom apologies are oftenest made. They stand, more than any other class, in the way of reform; and their respectability but renders their example the more pernicious. Just in proportion as they lop off the more odious features of slavery, and supply their place with kindness and prayers, just in that proportion does their example tend to make the great sin of slavery *respectable*—to hide its deformity and perpetuate its existence. Such men, moreover, are generally better informed than any other class of slaveholders; and hence, on the principle that light graduates guilt, they are most justly obnoxious to the charge of high-handed criminality. It is now as it was in ancient time: “judgment must begin at the house of God”—the church must first be purified before the system of slavery can be overthrown.

It is my earnest desire that your approaching anniversary may be marked by zealous and united action in the great cause of human rights—that your Society may adhere to the great principles of freedom with a firmness worthy of the hardy sons of the Green Mountains—and that the truth, pure and unsullied, may have free course, run and be glorified, until every vestige of oppression shall be done away and the whole human family shall rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free.

Yours affectionately,

OLIVER JOHNSON.

O. S. MURRAY, Cor. Sec. Vt. A. S. S.

NORTH-FERRISBURGH, 2d month 13th, 1837.

MY DEAR FRIEND, ORSON S. MURRAY:

Though prevented by a dispensation of Providence from attending the approaching anniversary of our Society, I assure thee I look to the event with an interest commensurate with my attachment to the cause of righteous liberty, and to the effect which your proceedings are designed to have upon its future progress. May you be endowed with wisdom in all your deliberations. May the friends of bleeding humanity be strengthened to persevere with renewed ardor in the moral conflict in which they are engaged; and its enemies be furnished, in your doings, with additional evidence of the utter hopelessness of all their efforts to arrest the progress of a cause which commends itself to the favor of God and the co-operation of all good men.

However we may look to legislative action for the consummation of our object, our present business is to *correct* and *purify* the fountain from which political corruption or political virtue flows; for in a government like this, it is vain to look for virtuous action in the hall of legislation, whilst wickedness and corruption prevail among the people. And in order to effect this needful purification, our efforts at present should be mainly directed to that class of our fellow citizens who are actuated by a higher motive than political preferment, worldly aggrandizement or pecuniary interest—who have hearts to feel for the sufferings of their fellow men, and consciences to appreciate the obligations of God's holy law. When this class are sufficiently aroused to their duty in relation to this great subject, our work will be well nigh accomplished—when these come up in one united phalanx, arrayed in the armour of truth, against the monster slavery, his destiny will be sealed.

In view of the importance of aiming our efforts at the *conscience* of our fellow citizens, both at the North and the South, could I enjoy the privilege of meeting with you on this interesting occasion, I should wish to present a resolution something like the following:

Resolved, That the buying, selling, giving, receiving or retaining our fellow men for the purpose of continuing them in slavery, is a heinous sin in the sight of God, and it is therefore the duty of Christians to withdraw from religious fellowship with those who persist in such unchristian practices.

Are we told that such a resolution betrays a want of charity towards those whose education and habits disqualify them for judging correctly upon the subject? that Southern professors do not see the sin of holding their fellow men in slavery, and therefore they should be admonished of their fault before this sentence is pronounced against them? We refer the objector to the Bible and to the principle of justice implanted in every man's breast, whose concurrent testimony seals their condemnation; and to the official records of two of the most prominent sects of the South; one of which declares "those who retain them in slavery, to be sinners of the first rank and guilty of the highest kind of theft;" and the other, that slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man and nature, and hurtful to society, contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing to others as we would not that others should do to us. Are we not administering admonition through every mail that goes to the South—the only means to address them left us by Lynch law, administered by those calling themselves Christians? And do they not manifest a fixed determination to shut out all Northern light upon the subject, and like some of old cry out, "let us alone?" Witness the proceedings of the last General Conference and General Assembly, and the more recent proceedings of some of the Southern ecclesiastical bodies.

Would such a resolution scatter fire brands in the church and sow discord among brethren? If it would, the fault is in those who give occasion for such a stand against the overflowing tide of corruption in the church, and not in those who would purify it from its foulest reproach.

Let the stagnant pool be agitated. Let the arrows of truth rankle in every guilty breast. Yes, rather than this awful sin should be cherished in the bosom of a body calling itself the church of Christ—sanctified and made respectable by such an alliance, and persisted in till it work the destruction of this republic, let the sentence of annihilation be executed against it, and on its ruins let another altar be reared,

"To Truth and Love and Mercy given:
And Freedom's gift and Freedom's prayer
Shall call an answer down from heaven."

I remain affectionately,

Thy friend in the cause of the oppressed,

KOWLAND T. ROBINSON.